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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are provided for faculty working with learning disabled (LD) students in the community college. After introductory material, the LD student is described as an individual of average or above average intelligence who demonstrates a significant discrepancy between intelligence and performance level because of problems in taking in, organizing, remembering, and expressing information. Several behavioral characteristics of LD students are then enumerated, such as their difficulty in following multiple-step directions and inability to work independently. Sources of on-campus assistance are also suggested, including assessment centers, instructional resource facilities, and vocational rehabilitation or career counselors. Finally, a chart identifies specific learning problems, indicates what teachers should do to address them, and suggests appropriate instructional strategies. For example, it is recommended that in response to students' low reading level, teachers should focus on materials with low readability and high interest levels, using, for instance, rewritten technical materials, visual demonstrations, and peer reading. Among the other problems discussed are slow reading, short attention span, poor oral communication, difficulties with abstract ideas, slowness to grasp generalizations and solve problems, inability to make decisions, differences in time perception, poor visual perception, poor motor skills, organizational difficulties, dependency on one or two particular individuals, failure identity, and poor motivation. (KL)

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COLUMBO IN THE CLASSROOM:

AN LD EXPERIENCE

IN THE

COMMUNITY COLLEGE SETTING

Florida Association of Community Colleges Conference

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COLUMBO IN THE CLASSROOM

An LD Experience in the Community College Setting

Today educators are witnessing more and more students with learning disabilities who are enrolled in local community colleges. Some of these students have already been assessed as having "learning disabilities;" others have not. Even those students having been diagnosed as "learning disabled" may not be recognized by their instructors as having any special learning needs.

As an instructor, how does one recognize a student with learning disabilities? What are the "signs" to be aware of in either student behavior, student learning patterns, or both? Once these characteristics have been consistently observed, what does an instructor do next? To whom, or what, does he/she then turn for referral assistance? And finally, once the learning disability is formally assessed, how does this information relate to actual classroom instruction?

The following presentation was geared to give concrete answers to these difficult, often frustrating, questions often met today by the community college instructor. To give further depth into the meaning of "learning disabilities," session participants were given several simulated experiences to orient them into the different perspective of the learning disabled. Unfortunately, these experiences cannot be replicated on paper. However, once having "felt" this perspective themselves, participants were much more open in listening to the nature and needs of the learning disabled student.

COLUMBO IN THE CLASSROOM

Presentation Outline

The Learning Disabled (LD) Community College Student

1. Definition of LD - just what is a learning disability?

2. The LD experience - What is it like to be LD?

   - Audience involvement with:
     (a) reading disabilities
     (b) auditory misperceptions
     (c) fine motor responses

3. Characteristics of LD students - How can you recognize this disability in others?

4. Referrals - Then what do you do/who can you turn to next?

5. Remediation/Compensation - Now that you know the problems (characteristics), what can you do for instruction?

   - Audience involvement with:
     (a) learning style inventory (Barsch)
     (b) precision teaching
     (c) study guides - organization of materials
     (d) tips on testing

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?*

The individual is first of average or above average intelligence. There is a significant discrepancy between his intelligence and his actual level of achievement in the classroom. This discrepancy is not primarily due to emotional disturbance, physical impairments, environmental disadvantage, rather it is due to a dysfunction in the basic learning process of getting complete information through his senses.

This student has the capacity to learn, but has problems in taking in, organizing, remembering and expressing (written or verbal) information. After years of poor achievement in school, the student has a very low opinion of himself.

*Rephrased from Federal Register, 42, No. 250, December 29, 1977, p. 65083.

Characteristics of LD Students in the Community College Setting

The LD student in the community college setting may exhibit one or several of the following general behavioral characteristics:

1. good listening skills, but may show difficulty in reading the printed subject matter.
2. difficulty in following multiple step directions (either oral or written) to carry through assignments
3. poor organizational skills in written assignments, daily tasks or schedules, or general paper upkeep (e.g. a "messy notebook")
4. difficulty in either near or far copying
5. memory problems
6. inability to efficiently work independently - sometimes resulting in limiting dependencies focused on one or two particular individuals
7. good verbal reasoning skills, but written work does not indicate the same caliber of skill development - inconsistencies between verbal and written work
8. poor written skills in spelling tasks
9. negative feelings about self and school
10. unrealistic self-expectations which can often be self-defeating in nature

Referrals Within the Community College Setting

1. assessment centers
2. special service departments
3. instructional resource facilities
4. student development departments
5. developmental/remedial laboratories
6. vocational rehabilitation counselors
7. career counseling centers

The LD Community College Student: Recognition and Rx

Characteristic	Need	Possible Activities Instructional Techniques
Low reading level	To focus on materials within a low-readability high-interest level	-Rewritten, technical material -Low-reading level, adult interest materials -Visual demonstrations -Audio-visual instruction -Guest speakers -Taped reading materials accompanying text -Hands-on activities -Reading peer (someone to read with)
Slow reading	To establish rhythmic, controlled reading and to decrease word-by-word reading pattern	-Precision timings to increase fluency -Controlled reader -Audio materials -Neurological impress reading method -(All of the above suggestions)
Short attention span	To provide immediate feedback, short activities, repetition, and variety	-Multimedia instructional materials
Poor oral communications	To provide practice in oral communication skills	-Role playing -Speeches -Interviews -Group drama -Video-tapes
Difficulty with abstract ideas	To relate concrete to abstract, step-by-step, in concrete activities	-Present samples of each object studied -Give concrete example of each concept introduced -Relate abstractions to reality in terms of the student's experiences -Build instruction on student's experience -Demonstrations with actual objects -Hands-on activities -Work experience
Slow to grasp generalizations	To provide meaning to general, abstract principles	-Move from simple to complex -Relate sub-concepts to major concepts -Present ideas or concepts in various ways -Summarize every lesson

Slow to solve problems, inability to make decisions	To provide structure and organization to "set the stage" for problem solving	-Provide structure and organization in problem solving and decision-making processes; then walk the student through the process -Provide active participation to focus on task -Analyze problem situations in a step-by-step fashion in order to find different ways to both identify and solve the problem -Give practice in practical problem solving
Differences in time perception	To find relevant means of internalizing the passage of time sequences	-Teach time concepts as related to daily, concrete tasks -Relate punctuality to employability skills -Sequencing activities on a concrete basis first, with a gradual progression to sequencing the more abstract -Develop a routine schedule -Create a written time management form
Poor visual perception	To develop shape, depth, and size in visual perceptions through the strength of the auditory, motor, and kinesthetic channels	-Use of geometric figures or parquetry designs, from the concrete to the pictorial representation -Use of audio learning devices: Cassettes, films, filmstrips, recorders, language masters, and audio-slides -Use large, clearly defined uncomplicated visual aids, high intensity contrast -Allow student to "trace" objects and to handle them
Poor motor skills	To gain practice in motor skills	-Hands-on activities from simple to complex tasks with related occupational tasks -Chalkboard activities

Organizational difficulties	To practice skills in organization: of materials, time, schedules, etc.	-Develop a consistent routine -Provide a step-by-step daily (subject) written management form -Provide outlines of subjects or skills to be mastered
Dependency on one or two particular individuals continually	To develop responsibility for own direction	-Model desired student behavior (skill), then "step-back" and allow student to make own mistakes and to achieve -Throw back questions to student to make them think
Failure identity	To build self-concept	-Create non-threatening, non-punitive activities and environment -Recognize small gains -Provide frequent praise approval through certificates, special recognitions, and smiles -Use of precision teachings for daily assessment -Opportunities for success and product completion
Insecurities	To build self-confidence	-Be consistent and fair -Make ground rules understandable, consistent, and enforceable -Move the student toward responsibility, self-direction, and indeperdence in making his own decisions and choices
Difficulties with motivation: appears apathetic, lazy, or bored	To provide meaning to learning	-No busy work -Special interest projects chosen by student -Guest speakers -Role models -On-the-job work experience -Peer tutoring -Relate content of skills/ subject to reality in the real world of work

TELL ME
AND I FORGET
SHOW ME
AND I REMEMBER
INVOLVE ME
AND I UNDERSTAND

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